

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Browns Lake Prescribed Burn
Proposed Implementation Date:	September 21, 2021
Proponent:	Clearwater Unit, Montana DNRC & Kyle Graveley, grazing lessee
Location:	North of Browns Lake, N ½, SW ¼ Section 16 T14N-R11W
County:	Powell

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The primary objective of this proposed project is to conduct a grazing lessee-proposed prescribed burn on a grazing lease north of Browns Lake. This is expected to reduce sage brush and conifer encroachment, increase the available forage for wildlife and livestock as well as increase the future revenue potential of the tract by increasing the Animal Unit Months (AUMs), the measure used to determine lease payments.

The purpose of this project from the rangeland ecology point of view is to release the native herbaceous vegetation from overstocked sagebrush. In climax condition this area would be expected to have no more than 5% of the current year's growth produced by sagebrush, a figure far lower than is present in the current conditions. Overstocking of sagebrush reduces the resources available to support native perennial grasses, this reduces the grazing value of the tract and increases the likelihood of resource damage caused by livestock. Prescribed fire to remove sagebrush will likely increase the grazing value and improve range condition, increase the profitability of the parcel, reduce the vulnerability of this parcel to livestock related erosion and overgrazing, and reduce the vulnerability of this parcel to invasion by non-native plants.

Treatments may include conifer encroachment removal, fire line preparation and broadcast burning to: promote healthy and more productive grazing ground, bring the site closer to historic vegetation conditions, address conifer encroachment due to fire suppression and provide long-term income for the Common Schools Trust.

The proposed treatments would take place under a prescribed burn plan carried out by DNRC, local fire departments and possibly contract crews. The proposal may treat approximately 160 acres. The proposed action would likely be implemented in the fall between 2021 and 2031.

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the Common Schools (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

DNRC specialists were consulted including Garrett Schairer, Wildlife Biologist; Andrea Stanley, Hydrologist / Soil Scientist; Jordan Rice, Range Specialist; and Patrick Rennie, Archeologist. Adjacent landowners and land managers were also contacted regarding this project.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Burning would be done in compliance with statewide cooperative agreements as well as any local restrictions.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action

None of the proposed prescribed burning would occur at this time. Other current land use activities including recreational use would continue.

Action Alternative

Under the Action Alternative, the DNRC would continue current land use activities, prescribed burning would occur.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The project is located in the Ward Creek drainage north of Browns Lake. The project area is located on flat and hummocky terrain associated with the underlying glacial till. Soils within the project area are mostly Shawmut and Winspect gravelly and cobbly loams (NRCS). These soils are rated low for potential fire damage hazard (NRCS). Slopes within the project area are less than 30% and slopes are assumed stable.

Past and existing disturbances in the project area include cattle grazing.

Proposed project activities would have a low risk of physical disturbance to soil resources. The proposed conifer encroachment removal, fireline preparation and prescribed burning will be completed with equipment and hand crews during dry conditions. Due to the low risk of physical disturbance, an increase in erosion risk over the existing condition would also be low.

The proposed activities will remove organic material from the project area by jackpot and broadcast burning. The scale of this removal is relatively small. The expected low to moderate intensity of the burn, retention of post-burn seedbeds, year of grazing deferment post-burn as well as the exclusion of burning immediately adjacent to Ward Creek is expected to ensure organic material continues to be available for decomposition and microclimates needed to maintain nutrient cycling and soil productivity at the project area.

Independently the project has a low risk of new impacts to soil resources. Impacts to soils from past grazing activities exist, however this project would have low risk of contributing to a cumulative impact.

Soil Mitigations:

- One year grazing deferment, post-burn.
- To prevent soil compaction, ground-based mechanical equipment operation off existing roads would be restricted to one or more of the following conditions: (1) soil moisture content at 4-inch depth less than 20% oven-dry weight, (2) minimum frost depth of 4 inches, or (3) minimum snow depth of 18 inches of loose snow or 12 inches packed snow.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

The project is located in the Ward Creek watershed, immediately north of Browns Lake. Slopes within the project area are less than 30%. Past and existing disturbances in the project area include cattle grazing.

Streams and other surface water features occur immediately adjacent to the project area.

Proposed project activities would have a low risk of impact to water quality and quantity resources due to the limited nature of the proposed work (limited vegetation removal and limited ground disturbance) and the distance of this work from surface water features. The proposed conifer encroachment removal, fireline preparation and prescribed burning will be completed with equipment and hand crews during dry conditions.

To determine the potential for Cumulative Watershed Effects for this analysis known management activities in the project area and the scope and extent of proposed activities are considered. Known disturbances in the project area are an existing road network and grazing. The proposed activity is conifer encroachment removal, fire line preparation and prescribed burning. This proposed work would have a low risk of adverse cumulative effect at the project area scale. Cumulative effects analysis was not scaled beyond the project area.

Water Quality & Quantity Mitigations:

- Meet mitigations listed in the soils section of this analysis to minimize erosion.
- Protect riparian shrubs that perform important bank stabilization and erosion resistance along the stream.
- Fire may be allowed to creep into riparian areas. No ignitions within 50 feet of streams and lakes.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The DNRC is a member of the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group which was formed to minimize or prevent smoke impacts while using fire to accomplish land management objectives and/or fuel hazard reduction (Montana/Idaho Airshed Group 2006). The Group determines the delineation of airsheds and impact zones throughout Idaho and Montana. Airsheds describe those geographical areas that have similar atmospheric conditions, while impact zones describe any area in Montana or Idaho that the Group deems smoke sensitive and/or having an existing air quality problem (Montana/Idaho Airshed Group 2006).

The project area is in Airshed 3b which encompasses much of northern Powell County. Currently, this airshed does not contain any impact zones. This project is located approximately 7 miles southeast of Ovando, Montana. Numerous residential properties are found interspersed throughout the project area. The Scapegoat Wilderness area lies approximately 10 miles northeast of the project area. This wilderness area exceeds 5,000 acres and as such, is considered a Federal Class I Area that ultimately receives protection under the Federal Clean Air Act of 1977.

No Action: Under the No Action Alternative, prescribed burning would not occur within the project areas. Thus, there would be no effects to air quality within the local vicinity and throughout Airshed 3b.

Action: Under the Action Alternative, jackpot and broadcast burning would occur. Burning would introduce particulate matter into the local airshed, temporarily affecting local air quality. Over 70% of emissions emitted from prescribed burning is less than 2.5 microns (National Ambient Air Quality PM 2.5). High, short-term levels of PM 2.5 may be hazardous. Within the typical column of biomass burning, the chemical toxics are: Formaldehyde, Acrolein, Acetaldehyde, 1,4 Butadiene, and Polycyclic Organic Matter.

Burning within the project area would be short in duration and would be conducted when conditions favored good to excellent ventilation and smoke dispersion as determined by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Prior to burning a "Prescribed Fire Burn Plan" would be done for the area. The DNRC, as a member of the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group, would burn only on approved days. Thus, direct and indirect effects to air quality due to burning associated with the proposed action would be minimal.

Burning that may occur on adjacent properties in combination with the proposed action could potentially increase cumulative effects to the local airshed and the Class I Areas. The United States Forest Service and large scale industrial forestry operations in the area participate as airshed cooperators and operate under the same Airshed Group guidelines as the DNRC. Non-industrial timberland operators are regulated by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and burning is only allowed during seasons that provide good ventilation and smoke dispersion. Thus, cumulative effects to air quality due to slash pile burning associated with the proposed action would also be expected to be minimal.

Pick-up travel could create dust which may affect local air quality. This would be short-term in duration. Thus, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality due vehicle travel associated with the proposed action would be minimal.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

No rare plants have been identified in the project area.

No Action: Under the No Action Alternative, prescribed burning would not occur within the project area. Thus, effects to vegetation are expected to include forage removal from grazing activities and an increase in sagebrush composition on-site due to lack of fire.

Action: Under the Action Alternative, prescribed burning would occur within the project area. This is expected to release the native herbaceous vegetation from overstocked sagebrush.

To prevent introduction of new weeds, off-road equipment will be cleaned and inspected prior to entry into harvest areas. Management following a burn will include at least one year of grazing deferment and monitoring to ensure desirable species are re-colonizing the burn area and invasion by weeds or invasive annuals is not taking place. Post-burn weed spraying will occur as needed.

Noxious weed spread is not expected to be greatly increased by this action or cause cumulative impacts to vegetation based on the mitigation measures.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Ward Creek and Browns Lake are immediately adjacent to the project area. Both support native and non-native fish populations. The burn will not reach the stream or lake edge thereby leaving a vegetative buffer to intercept runoff and sediment; this makes the likelihood of increased sediment delivery due to the project unlikely. There is low risk of direct, in-direct or cumulative effects to fish habitat or aquatic life with the proposed action.

Terrestrial and Avian Wildlife

The project area includes roughly 344 acres of non-forested native range land and approximately 93 acres of small scattered patches of forest cover dominated by Douglas-fir and aspen. Past activities in the project area have included livestock grazing; ongoing timber management would continue. The project area includes roughly 430 acres of white-tailed deer winter range and 110 acres of elk winter range. Winter range for mule deer and moose is not present in the project area. The project area is surrounded by USFWS lands, and private lands, many of which are covered by conservation easements held by the USFWS. Activities on these lands are largely focused on agricultural activities, cattle grazing, and promotion of wildlife habitat.

No Action Alternative: Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Under the No Action Alternative, prescribed burning would not occur within the project area. Thus, wildlife using the area would not experience the associated disturbance effects and alterations to existing habitats would not be anticipated. Wildlife use of the project area would be expected to be similar to present levels. Existing levels of human disturbance would not appreciably change. No appreciable changes to the existing big game winter range, summer range, or security habitats would be anticipated. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial and avian wildlife would be anticipated since: 1) no appreciable changes to existing habitats would occur; 2) human disturbance levels would not be anticipated to change; and 3) no changes in wildlife use would be expected to occur.

Action Alternative: Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Under the Action Alternative, prescribed burning would occur within the project area. This is expected to release the native herbaceous vegetation from overstocked sagebrush. The potential disturbance to existing wildlife would be temporary and would only occur during the short-term. Associated changes in habitats and existing structure could alter wildlife species using the project area. These changes would mimic natural disturbance

regimes and the suite of naturally occurring wildlife would likely benefit from the modifications. These species relying solely on dense sage brush habitats would be expected to see a decline in available habitats, however extensive amounts of these habitats exist on the surrounding landscape. Improvements in native herbaceous vegetation would also increase available big game forage into the future. No appreciable changes to snow intercept and/or thermal cover capacity would be anticipated in the project area. Proposed activities could reduce visual screening which could reduce big game use and potentially big game mortality. Minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial and avian wildlife would be anticipated since: 1) some modifications to existing habitats would occur; 2) human disturbance levels would be elevated in the short-term, but no changes in long-term human disturbance levels would occur; and 3) no changes in wildlife use would be expected to occur.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Fisheries- No streams supporting fish or stream segments with connectivity to down slope fisheries occur within the proposed prescribed burn area. The project access road enters Highway 200 and does not cross or parallel any fish supporting streams either. The likelihood of sediment delivery is very unlikely. No Federally listed threatened and endangered fish species or critical habitat for threatened and endangered fish species as designated by the USFWS would be affected by this project. There is very low risk of direct, in-direct or cumulative effects to fish habitat or aquatic life with the proposed action.

Terrestrial and Avian Wildlife

The project area includes roughly 344 acres of non-forested native range land and approximately 93 acres of small scattered patches of forest cover dominated by Douglas-fir and aspen. Past activities in the project area have included livestock grazing; ongoing timber management would continue.

The project area is surrounded by USFWS lands, and private lands, many of which are covered by conservation easements held by the USFWS. Activities on these lands are largely focused on agricultural activities, cattle grazing, and promotion of wildlife habitat.

The following species were considered but eliminated from detailed study due to lack of habitat present: black-backed woodpecker, Coeur d'Alene salamander, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, common loon, fisher, harlequin duck, mountain plover, northern bog lemming, peregrine falcon, Townsend's big-eared bat, and wolverine.

Grizzly Bear- The project area is 5 miles southwest of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bear recovery area and is in the 'occupied' grizzly bear habitat area as mapped by grizzly bear researchers and managers to address increased sightings and encounters of grizzly bears in habitats outside of recovery zones. Extensive use by grizzly bears would not be anticipated given the proximity to Highway 200, other open roads, and numerous other forms of human disturbance in the area. Individual animals could occasionally use the project area while dispersing or possibly foraging, and they could be displaced by project-related disturbance if they are in the area during proposed activities. Proposed prescribed burning would reduce visual screening in the project area, which would further reduce potential for use by grizzly bears. However, given their large home range sizes, the anticipated use potential, and manner in which grizzly bears use a broad range of forested and non-forested habitats, the proposed activities and alterations of range vegetation on the project area would have negligible influence on grizzly bears. There would likely be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to grizzly bears as a result of the proposed action.

Lynx- Roughly 43 acres of potential winter foraging habitats was identified in the project area. These habitats are discontinuous and separated from other suitable habitats by open and dry habitat types not typically used by lynx. Proposed activities would not occur in these suitable habitats. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Canada lynx would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo- No suitable habitats are in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Yellow-billed Cuckoos would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.

Sensitive

Bald Eagle—The proposed activities would be located roughly 1.4 mi from the Browns Lake East Bald Eagle territory. Topographic and vegetative screening exists between the proposed units and the existing nest site. The nature and timing of the proposed activities would not be expected to disturb nesting bald eagles using this territory. Proposed activities would not alter availability of large snags that may be used as nesting or perching sites. There would likely be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to bald eagles as a result of the proposed action.

Pileated Woodpecker- Approximately 43 acres of potential pileated woodpecker habitat exists in the project area, but none of this would be included in the proposed activities, thus no changes in available habitats or use of the project area by pileated woodpeckers would be anticipated. Proposed prescribed burning would be expected to have no effect on nesting or foraging habitats for pileated woodpeckers. There would likely be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to pileated woodpeckers as a result of the proposed action.

Flammulated Owl- Roughly 43 acres of potential flammulated owl habitats exist in the project area. These habitats would not be included in the proposed burn area, thus no appreciable changes in available habitats would be anticipated. Alterations to open habitats could slightly reduce foraging habitats should flammulated owls be in the vicinity. There would be a minor risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to flammulated owls would be anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

Gray Wolf- Several groups of wolves inhabit the greater area near Ovando. Given the small area, the availability of other habitats in the area, as well as the proximity to Highway 200 and numerous open roads, extensive wolf use would not be anticipated. Wolves using the area could be disturbed by proposed activities and are most sensitive at den and rendezvous sites, which are not known to occur in the project area or within 1 mile of the project area. Proposed activities would occur in white-tailed deer and elk winter ranges, but no appreciable changes in thermal cover or snow intercept capacities would be anticipated. Proposed activities could reduce visual screening, which could temporarily increase wolf vulnerability and cause slight shifts in big game use, which could lead to a shift in wolf use of the project area. There would likely be low risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to gray wolves as a result of the proposed action.

Columbian sharp-tailed grouse- Although grassland/shrubland communities occur in the project area, recent research indicates Columbian sharp-tailed grouse likely never inhabited western Montana (Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, 2018). Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Columbian sharp-tailed grouse would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.

Greater Sage Grouse – The proposed activities would occur in sagebrush habitats, but occurs outside of the distribution for sage grouse in Montana. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program does not cover the project area. Any changes in sage grouse habitats in the project area would not influence greater sage grouse conservation in Montana. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to greater sage grouse would be anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

NONE

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. No additional archaeological investigative work will

be conducted in response to this proposal. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Any change to the scenery in the area from these alternatives would be in addition to past vegetation management (grazing, prescribed burning, etc.) and future fire activity within the project area. This analysis includes all past and present effects.

No Action

If the no action alternative is selected, the site will remain overstocked with sagebrush. Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics would be minimal.

Action

The project would be partially visible from Browns Lake Road in the Ovando area.

Through the proposed action, prescribed fire would result in decreases in vegetation present and a burned appearance. It would be noticeable, yet temporary. Generally, burns in light vegetation green up in the next growing season – 6 months to a year post-burn.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

NONE

No impacts are likely to occur under either alternative.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

Both the EA for the Browns Lake Timber Permit (DNRC T15275, 2015) and the Echo Mountain Project Environmental Assessment (DNRC, 2019) include land within Section 16 but outside the proposed prescribed burn area. No effects (cumulative or immediate) are expected from the proposed prescribed burn and past uses. Livestock grazing under a lease is expected to continue as the primary revenue generating use. Recreational use will also continue to occur

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Smoke could impair drivers' vision on Browns Lake Road and Highway 200 during the prescribed burn. Signs on the highway noting prescribed burning ahead would be used to warn motorists.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed action would lead to an increase in forage production which is expected to increase the grazing carrying capacity and revenue generation on the parcel.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

A few short-term jobs in the local area may be created for the duration of the proposed action, approximately 10 work days.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action has only indirect, limited implications for tax collections.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Aside from DNRC and local government fire resources on-site during the prescribed burn and post-burn monitoring, the impact on government services should be minimal due to the temporary nature of the proposed action.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None. Re-introduction of fire onto the state ownership is complementary to similar plans on adjacent private lands and to lands owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Burning of some adjacent private land would likely be conducted sequentially, in concert with this proposed burning of state-owned property.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Recreation access to and use of Browns Lake is not expected to be impacted by the proposed action.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

The project has no direct implications for density and distribution of population and housing.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

The proposed action has no direct implications for social structures and mores.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project has no direct implications for cultural uniqueness and diversity.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

No Action: The grazing lease on the DNRC parcel would continue.

Action: Approximately 160 acres would be burned as part of this project. The general cost of prepping and burning per acre recently on Clearwater Unit has ranged from \$20.00 to \$100.00 per acre for similar projects. Estimates of value are difficult to predict given the variability of burns, use of employees and volunteers, training opportunities provided, and grant opportunities utilized to recuperate costs. Assuming DNRC employee costs and fuel, a total cost of the entire project is expected to be around \$3,200.00. Assuming a net increase in forage production and an estimated 20 AUM increase annually, the cost should be recovered in 12 years (\$3,200.00/(20 AUM X \$13.41/AUM)).

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Kristen Baker-Dickinson Title: Unit Manager, Clearwater Unit	Date: June 24, 2021
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V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Following a review of this document as well as corresponding Department policies and rules, the Action Alternative has been selected because it meets the intent of the project objectives outlined in Section I – Type and Purpose of Action. This includes but is not limited to the requirement that DNRC administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

Consistent with DNRC Policy; A prescribed fire burn plan will be prepared and approved prior to project implementation. This plan will outline the weather and fuel conditions under which burning will be allowed, the resources needed, and the tactical methods to be employed to implement the plan. The burn plan will include contingency plans in the event of fire escape. A qualified burn boss will be assigned to implement this plan.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I find that the Action Alternative will not have significant impacts for the following reasons:

- The Action Alternative is in compliance with the existing laws, rules, policies, and standards applicable to this type of proposed action.
- Appropriate mitigations have been proposed to minimize potential impacts to resources such as soil, water quality, and fisheries.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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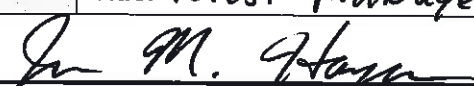
EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Jon M. Hayes Title: Forest Management Program manager, SWLO
Signature: 	Date: 7-2-21